

584 dispose of it as he pleased. On her return a feast was held—the *tero nyako*—for her and her companions. Preparations for this feast were made before her arrival, and the guests invited and the kind of entertainment provided seems to have varied according to the family circumstances. If the parents were poor only the girl's sisters and the friends of her own age who had accompanied her were present; porridge and milk were set before them, and the guests returned on the same day to their own homes. But if the family was rich, older relations and friends of both sexes were invited and were given meat and beer. The quantity of beer required was often more than could be stored in the accustomed place, namely the hut belonging to the girl's mother, and in this case a temporary shelter was built, known as the *siwandha*. It was constructed of reed mats between the mother's hut and the hut next to it, and if the number of reed mats available in the *dala* was insufficient, more were borrowed from the neighbours. After the beer had been drunk the *siwandha* hut was dismantled and its component parts returned to their owners. The guests stayed two or even three days, and it was the convention that before their departure a final meal of meat or of a kind of dried fish called *kabaka* (an expensive dish that cost a goat to buy) should be provided and cooked for them by the mother of the bride.

A sort of parallel to this feast known as *lupo* then took place in the bridegroom's *dala*, a cow or a goat being sent to him by the bride's parents to be killed and eaten by his brothers and sisters.

291 After the *tero nyako* and the *lupo* had taken place a bull known
584 as the *dho golo onyimbo* was paid by the bridegroom, and with them he sent a new *onyimbo*, specially made for her, to the bride. She then returned the *onyimbo* lent to her by the bridegroom's sister, and also took off the small *chieno* and burnt it, being now entitled to wear the big *chieno* of the married woman. This was a bunch of alce fibre about ten inches long and thick enough to have a diameter of three or four inches. It was tied tightly at the top like a tassel, and was worn hanging from the small of the back, being attached to a string which passed round the waist. This, and a six inch square apron of fibre string was all that a Luo woman wore, apart from her ornaments until the advent of the Indian trader with his cotton piece goods at the beginning of the century.*

[68] * Even now a woman who puts on a cotton dress when she leaves the *dala* sometimes reverts to the privacy of her home to the traditional nakedness adorned only by the tassel and the fringe, and often the dress is put on over the tassel. This curious ornament has clearly a ritual if not a magical significance, of which I hope to obtain details later. I was informed that if a man touches, accidentally or purposely, the tassel of a married woman, he has to pay a fine of three goats to her husband. Moreover, when a woman loses her husband she discards her tassel of alce fibre and replaces it by one of banana fibre, and this tassel apparently has maleficent properties. For if any man annoys her, she is likely to take it off and beat one of his cows with it, whereupon the cow is regarded as bewitched, and no one will buy it, or accept it in payment of a debt.

642 have absolute power, but in reality their influence is not great. Each chief
 643 subdivides his territory, placing each portion under a sub-chief. These sub-chiefs
 or headmen are supposed to attend frequently at the chief's village in order to hear
 and carry out his orders. If a crisis arises, an informal council of the heads of the
 village is called and the *patres familiarum* can express their views, though the
 decision rests with the chief. There is no kind of voting. This council will also
 assemble if the rule of the chief becomes intolerable. They may threaten to
 secede, but their resistance is always passive; the usual result, however, is that
 one or more of the headmen set up as chiefs on their own account, and quietly
 [42] disregard the orders of their *quondam* superior. Land is held in common by the
 members of each clan, but jealously guarded from subjects of all other chiefs. A
 [66] man may, and frequently does, move from one clan to another, but in that case he
 has to obey the orders of the chief to whose clan he has attached himself. There
 are no formalities attendant on such a change.

578 Trespass by the members of one chieftaincy upon the land of another is
 indeed the usual cause of the frequent small quarrels which arise and very often
 lead to bloodshed.

Internally, however, private ownership of land has to some extent made its
 423 appearance. The Jalu village represents a family, the headman being the father
 621 or (if he be dead) the eldest brother. Besides his family he will, if he is a chief, or
 [177] sub-chief, generally shelter one or two retainers whom he calls his *askari*,¹ police.
 When the time comes for laying out the *Shamba*¹ or agricultural land, each adult
 male and female marks out and tills his own piece, the married women being
 helped by their daughters and younger sons; although the family in practice share
 the produce, theoretically the crop from each plot belongs to the member who
 tilled it; thus, if one of the sons wishes to sell some grain he can only sell what he
 has grown himself, and, similarly, one *askari* reaping what another has sown would
 be considered a thief.

685 Cases occasionally arise which illustrate this: if A's cattle or goats wander
 into B's *shamba*, though A and B live in one village, B claims compensation.
 423 Private tenure is, however, only temporary. If a village uses a certain piece of
 land for a year and then leaves it, another village may cultivate there; but as
 the *shambas* are usually close to the villages, and villages are separated by some
 little distance, such cases of appropriation are practically unknown. The rights,
 however, to a certain piece of land are only squatter's rights and confer no claim
in perpetuo.

361 In shape the Jalu village is circular and is fenced round with euphorbia
 [343] bush, stone or mud walls, or wattle, as may be most convenient. In the centre
 is the cattle pen; around this are the store houses of basket or wicker work;
 they are raised some two feet from the ground and are about five feet high
 and three feet in diameter; there is a small opening near the top sufficient to

¹ Swahili word adopted.

allow a man's head and shoulders to enter; the roof is of grass. Outside these again is the circle of huts, strongly built of sticks and grass and with the sides plastered with a mixture of dung and mud. Each married male in the village has his own hut, and besides this a hut for each wife and two smaller huts, one for his sons and another for his daughters, which latter live with an old woman, often their grandmother. The two sexes are kept rigidly apart, and though, as will be seen, the Jaluo notion of morality is scarcely the same as the European, there is little of the promiscuity of intercourse among the Kavirondo which is so noticeable a feature among the other Nilotic tribes of British East Africa. 361
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As the sons grow up they marry and build houses in the father's village for themselves and their wives. The eldest son usually remains with his father for good and all, but as the other sons in turn become fathers of families, they often build villages for themselves near the paternal village; as often as not, however, the sons keep together after the father's death, the eldest becoming the head of the family. 591

There is a strict law of exogamy among the Jaluo, though a son may marry his father's wife if she is no blood relation of his; similarly two sisters are often simultaneously the wives of one man. 582

Their rule of inheritance, though apparently complicated, is really simple. The husband sets aside so many of his cattle to provide food for each wife, the chief or first wife naturally having a larger share than the rest. On his death the wife and the cattle set aside for her pass to her sons, her eldest son as the new *pater familias* again getting the larger share. If a man has no sons by the first wife but sons by another, all the property, including the first wife and her daughters, pass to these sons; if a man has no sons, all his property passes to his brother or nearest male blood relation; females can own no property, being themselves but chattels. On the death of a chief his power descends upon the eldest son of his first wife, even though his second or third wife may have borne him a son before the son by the first wife was born; i.e., A is his first and chief wife and E his second. A may bear him two daughters, B and C, and then a son D. Though in the meanwhile E has borne him a son F, D will become chief in virtue of his mother's priority, even though he has an elder brother (F). But if D is not of fit age to govern, F may become chief, as a regency is too advanced an institution; and similarly if both D and F are infants, some elder blood relation, such as their eldest uncle, will succeed their father. This rule not unnaturally leads to much quarrelling, as, when the dispossessed heir grows up he often lays claim to rule, with disastrous results. 428
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A great many formalities attend a Kavirondo marriage. As has been remarked above, exogamy is the strict rule. The young man having declared his choice to his father, the latter goes off to the girl's father and arranges the dowry. He then returns, and the intending bridegroom goes over with a bull or some goats as earnest money and partakes of the preliminary feast, an essential feature of this being an offering set aside for the sun-god, consisting of a little meat, part of a 583
584

THE RELUCTANT LUO

IV

After Mr. Onyango had spoken, others said their piece, and I asked the opinions of some of the women, who will never speak unless they are directly asked. One replied, through an interpreter, in these words: [177]
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'I was against consolidation. My own land was fertile and I did not want to lose it and have other land not as good as mine. I tried to persuade my husband. We had many arguments, and the peace of our house was destroyed. At last I saw that I must give in if our home was to become peaceful again. We exchanged gardens, and then I saw that the new gardens were as fertile as my own. Now the men are helping women on the land and this is something that has never happened before. Men and women are working together. This is because the men see that there is money in growing crops and that bigger crops will make them rich.' [462]

A second woman—both were middle-aged—spoke after her, 'I was not of that opinion. I wanted consolidation before it came here. If you have land near your home, you can work to improve it. If it is a long way off, you cannot put on manure. I understood the value of manure by seeing crops grown by the Better Farmers. Before, I had four *shambas* and one was over a mile away. Now they are all together and near my home. There is only one difficulty. Our custom is, when a son gets married, he leaves his father's *shamba* to start one of his own. I do not want to break this custom, but now I have a married son and there is nowhere for him to go.' [241]
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And a third woman, rather older, added her piece.

'I was in favour of consolidation too. The boundaries of land have caused many disputes and quarrels amongst us. When there are fixed boundaries, these quarrels fade away. So I wanted consolidation before it came, and my husband agreed. Now I can farm properly and put manure on the *shamba*; we have a shed for the cattle to stay in at night. Besides that, my husband employs two men. When he goes away I supervise them and the work is not so hard. Men and women never worked together before. Now they do, and this is a big thing.' [578]
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